

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 03709 181220Z
ACTION NODS-00

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 3709

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

NEA/IAI FOR AMBASSADOR LEWIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PEPR, IS, LE, US, XF
SUBJECT: DAYAN'S FUNK OVER LEBANON

REF: TEL AVIV 3708

1. DAYAN'S FUNK OVER WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE THE GOVERNMENT'S BLUNDER INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON CONTINUES. (MORE ON HIS GENERAL BAD HUMOR SEPTTEL). HE INSISTS HE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PLANNING OR THE DECISION-MAKING INVOLVING THE OPERATION, AND BELIEVES IT TO BE A DISASTER ON SEVERAL SCORES: ITS WIDER IMPLICATIONS WERE NOT THOUGHT THROUGH ISRAEL FINDS ITSELF ALONE IN A DIPLOMATIC MORASS OF ITS OWN MAKING; AND, MILITARILY, IT MAKES NO SENSE TO STOP AFTER TEN KILOMETERS.

2. WHAT IS MORE, DAYAN IS MAKING NO SECRET OF HIS FEEL-
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INGS. HAVE ALREADY REPORTED THAT WHIN I DELIVERED OUR DEMARCHE ON LEBANON MARCH 16, DAYAN POINTEDLY REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSION ALTHOUGH IMPLORED TO DO SO BY BEGIN. THAT EVENING THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR ATTEMPTED TO DELIVER A UK DEMARCHE AND DAYAN REFUSED EVEN TO RECEIVE IT, REFERRING AMB MASON DIRECTLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER. IN EFFORT TO SMOKE OUT BEGIN ON DAYAN'S NON-

ROLE, I ASKED HIM MARCH 17 WHETHER I SHOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OR WITH WEIZMAN ON POLITICAL ASPECTS OF LEBANESE PROBLEM. BEGIN OBVIOUSLY CAUGHT THE POINT, HE ASSURED ME ALL WAS WELL WITH DAYAN, THAT DAYAN WAS FULLY INVOLVED IN DELIBERATIONS, AS WERE OTHER SENIOR CABINET MEMBERS, AND I SHOULD NOT READ ANYTHING INTO DAYAN'S SILENCE DURING OUR MARCH 16 MEETING. BEGIN DENIED THAT DAYAN HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT AMBASSADOR MASON'S DEMARCHE, SAYING THAT DAYAN HAD DESCRIBED IT AND THE ENSUING CONVERSATION WITH MASON TO HIM OVER THE PHONE. MASON TELLS ME THIS IS TOTALLY FALSE; THAT DAYAN SAID HE HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN ANY OF THE PLANNING OF THE SOUTH LEBANESE OPERATION AND CONSIDERS IT A MILITARY AND POLITICAL DISASTER FOR ISRAEL. HE TOLD MASON HE WOULD NOT DISCUSS THE SITUATION "AS FOREIGN MINISTER" WITH HIM, THAT HE SHOULD DEAL ONLY WITH BEGIN OR WEIZMAN.

3. A SOURCE VERY CLOSE TO THE DAYAN FAMILY INFORMS US THAT HIS PRESENT PSYCHOLOGICAL MOOD IS DARK AND FOREBODING. DAYAN'S WIFE DESCRIBES HIS AS DISTRAUGHT AND DEPRESSED.

4. WHATEVER HIS STATE OF MIND, LET THERE BE NO DOUBT THAT DAYAN WILL ARRIVE IN THE US PRIMED TO DO HIS UTMOST ON ISRAEL'S BEHALF. HE HAS MADE NO SECRET THAT HE HAS NO STOMACH FOR GOING TO WASHINGTON, BUT HE HAS ALSO SAID "I WILL BE THERE WHEN ISRAEL NEEDS ME."
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